UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/1106
29 October 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 29 OCTOBER 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 28 October 1999 (see annex), which I have received from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

99-32234 (E) 291099

Annex

Letter dated 28 October 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) of 15 September 1999, I attach the third periodic report on the operations of the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) (see appendix). I would appreciate your making the report available to the Security Council.

(Signed) Penny WENSLEY

Appendix

Third periodic report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Force, East Timor

13 to 26 October 1999

I. Introduction

1. In the period since the last report to the Security Council, and a month after the initial deployment of the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET), the multinational force has moved into the Ambino enclave, providing a presence throughout all East Timor regencies. On 22 October, independence figure Xanana Gusmao returned to East Timor. Following a meeting with the Commander of INTERFET, Gusmao visited Falintil Headquarters and conducted a tour of Dili, with INTERFET providing security.

2. Although the western border regions pose a challenge to the maintenance of peace and security, the situation in East Timor has greatly improved over that facing INTERFET upon its arrival. The success of INTERFET in meeting its mandate, together with the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly agreement to revoke the 1978 decree incorporating East Timor into Indonesia, and the adoption of Security Council resolution 1272 (1999) of 25 October 1999, establishing the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) are important steps in the early deployment of a peacekeeping operation.

3. While militia elements cannot be entirely removed from the equation, their capacity to destabilize East Timor has been reduced to a very low level. Where militias are active INTERFET has demonstrated its ability to respond quickly and deal effectively with these incidents.

II. Cooperation with the Government of Indonesia

4. The most significant development in the period since the Government of Indonesia invited an international force to restore security in East Timor is the agreement of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) to revoke the 1978 decree incorporating East Timor into Indonesia. The remaining Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) forces are expected to withdraw from East Timor shortly and assets jointly controlled by INTERFET and TNI will become the responsibility of INTERFET. This is a welcome development and an important milestone in the transition to a United Nations transitional administration and peacekeeping operation.

5. Cooperation between INTERFET and TNI continues with a joint investigation of the border incident at Motaain (see S/1999/1072, para. 14). The report will be forwarded to the Secretary-General.

III. Restoration of peace and security

6. INTERFET is represented by forces from Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. As at 25 October, INTERFET had approximately 8,000 personnel deployed in East Timor.

7. Since the second report to the Security Council was tabled, only one significant security incident has occurred involving INTERFET. On 16 October, an INTERFET patrol was attacked by an estimated 20 armed militiamen near the town of Bobonaro, approximately 12 to 15 kilometres from the border with West Timor. INTERFET sustained no casualties in the action, but three militiamen were reported killed, with a further three wounded.

8. On 22 October, INTERFET entered the separate East Timor enclave of Ambino. Weapons consisting of pipe guns and knives were confiscated. Oecussi, the major centre of the enclave, was essentially deserted, with the church remaining as the only significant structure. Three local East Timorese were evacuated by INTERFET to Dili for treatment of wounds caused by militiamen and suspected to be approximately one month old.

9. On 22 October, Xanana Gusmao returned to Dili. His return is an important indicator of the restoration of peace in the territory, and particularly Dili. Mr. Gusmao has discussed the need for reconciliation and has publicly called for militiamen to peacefully reintegrate themselves into East Timorese society. INTERFET is providing his personal security.

10. Dili continues to show signs of stability and security, with more than 70,000 displaced residents returning to a secure environment. The Dili market has reopened. Attention is turning to the rebuilding of civil institutions. The major impediment remains the lack of suitable accommodation as a result of the destruction that followed the announcement of the ballot.

11. Overall, the INTERFET coalition has achieved a very significant proportion of its mandate concerning the restoration of peace and security, with the key indicators being the increased level of security in towns and on roads, and the reduced incidence of violence against INTERFET. While small groups of militiamen remain in East Timor, their ability to physically threaten the local population is largely gone. When security has been threatened, INTERFET has responded quickly and effectively to resolve the incident, and has achieved these results with the minimal use of force. On the basis of progress to date, the expectation is that INTERFET will have achieved its mandate in time for the transition to UNTAET.

IV. Protection of and support for the United Nations Mission in East Timor

12. The progress made by INTERFET on the restoration of peace and security means that UNAMET activities are now unhindered by the security concerns. With the adoption of Security Council resolution 1272 (1999), INTERFET will extend

its support to members of UNTAET. INTERFET welcomes the decision on the UNTAET deployment, recognizing the urgency of restoring the broader aspects of civil administration, absent since violence first erupted early in September.

V. Facilitation of humanitarian assistance operations

13. The ability to distribute humanitarian assistance safely continues to increase with the growing level of general security throughout the territory, and the pace of security restoration has outstripped the pace of aid distribution in some cases. Humanitarian relief efforts are ongoing in most parts of East Timor, including the border regions in the west. Humanitarian assistance in the Ambino enclave will have commenced by the time the present report is presented to the Security Council.

14. The major humanitarian challenges facing the relief effort in East Timor at present are the return of large numbers of displaced persons (from both internal areas and West Timor) and the commencement of the wet season.

15. INTERFET continues to open western border areas for humanitarian aid convoys distributing food and non-food aid. These western border regions remain relatively hazardous for returnees from West Timor, although TNI appears to be providing protection for some of these convoys. Aid agencies are providing regular assessments of urgent humanitarian needs, infrastructure and the logistics situation in most districts of East Timor. To date, over 14,000 displaced persons are estimated to have returned to East Timor by sea, land and air, including the arrival of over 3,000 persons in Dili and Baucau by sea and air on 25 October. More than 100,000 East Timorese are expected to re-enter the territory over the coming months.

16. The onset of the wet season will impose additional burdens on the people of East Timor and the various aid organizations. Of concern is the need to provide sufficient shelter. Transport on already poor roads will become more difficult.

VI. Observations

17. As East Timor becomes more secure and the population returns, the lack of many aspects of civil administration becomes more apparent. There is growing demand for increased civil services as well as the reconstruction and reconciliation of society. As the United Nations commanded peacekeeping operation is integral to the transitional authority, the commencement of detailed planning and early liaison between the commander of the peacekeeping operation and the Commander of INTERFET would assist the transition greatly.

VII. Outlook

18. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1272 (1999), authorizing the presence of UNTAET in East Timor, is welcome. INTERFET has an established presence throughout East Timor, including the Ambino enclave. The security situation has improved dramatically since 20 September, the date of the initial

INTERFET deployment. Militia challenges to the mandate of INTERFET are isolated and are dealt with quickly. The continuing build-up of INTERFET forces will further improve the overall security situation. The Commander of INTERFET is confident that the conditions are approaching a time when it would be appropriate to hand over INTERFET to the UNTAET military component.

19. Consequently, INTERFET would welcome the early deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping operation Force Commander and his key staff in order to coordinate planning between the United Nations peacekeeping operation and INTERFET. The early deployment of the UNTAET peacekeeping operation's headquarters would facilitate a transfer of forces and responsibilities.